



Enjoy a Sneeze-Free Fall

As the crisp fall air chases people indoors for the coming winter, allergy sufferers may feel relieved to be safe from summer's onslaught of airborne allergens. However, for people with perennial rhinitis, the coming months may make them more of a target for the sniffles and sneezes.

Allergic rhinitis is an inflammation of the nasal passages that occurs when allergens touch the lining of your nose. Symptoms include sneezing, congestion, a runny nose and itchiness of the throat, nose, roof of the mouth, eyes and ears. When symptoms are worse in the warmer months, they are likely to be triggered by pollen and/or molds and indicate a case of seasonal allergic rhinitis. People who suffer from perennial rhinitis experience symptoms year-round.

Irritants such as strong smells, pollution, or smoke trigger non-allergic rhinitis, or irritant rhinitis. Non-allergic rhinitis usually afflicts adults and causes year-round symptoms, especially nasal congestion and headaches, similar to the symptoms of perennial rhinitis.

Perennial rhinitis can be triggered by common indoor allergens, such as:

- Animal dander
- Indoor molds
- Cockroach droppings
- Dust mites – microscopic creatures found in the home

Create allergen-free zone

It is important for people with perennial rhinitis to prepare their homes for the long months spent indoors during the fall and winter. Indoor allergy sufferers can reduce their symptoms by taking the following steps:

- Control humidity throughout the home by using a dehumidifier or central air conditioning.
- Encase mattresses, box springs and pillows in airtight, zippered plastic or special allergen-proof fabric covers.
- Wash bedding weekly in hot water and dry in a hot dryer.
- Clean or replace furnace filters and clean heating ducts. This reduces the spread of dust.
- Replace bedding and carpeting that has animal dander on it. It can take weeks or months for fabrics to come clean of allergens.
- Keep any pets out of the bedroom, creating a dander-free area.
- Fix and seal any leaky pipes and faucets to keep cockroaches at bay and molds in check.
- Use a cleaning solution of 5% bleach and a small amount of detergent to clean areas with mold. If mold and mildew are visible in the carpeting or wallpaper, replace it.

- Remove or wash stuffed animals, which can gather dust mites.

Making changes to your indoor environment can take some time. To begin, you may want to make a checklist. Over time, changes will make an indoor environment that is less allergenic, easier to clean and healthier for the whole family.

*Adapted from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology